Collaborating Across Boundaries: Insights for Human Resources, Sustainability and Governance

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Why Collaborate? Think DaVinci

- Lateral thinking
- Creativity that stems from taking knowledge from one context or discipline and applying it to another
- DaVinci: art, science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, architecture

Human arm → bird’s wing → flying machine

What about mandated collaboration?
Our Research

Survey of US Senior Executive Service, US Local Government Managers, and Country of India Senior Forest Service Officers

15 questions: replicated research in New Zealand and Hong Kong

Defined term: **Collaboration** means to work across boundaries and in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. (Agranoff & McGuire, 2004)
Why Collaborate?

Indian Forest Service:
#1 Improves outcomes
#2 Improves problem solving processes

U.S. Senior Executive Service:
#1 Mandated
#2 Improves outcomes

U.S. Local Government Managers:
#1 Right thing to do
#2 Leverage resources
#3 Improve outcomes
What Makes Collaboration Work?

Indian Forest Service:
#1 Relational

U.S. Senior Executive Service:
#1 Relational

U.S. Local Government Managers:
#1 Relational
Consequences of Collaboration: Positives

Indian Forest Service:
#1 Better results/outcomes (economic, quality of product, accomplish more, timely)

U.S. Senior Executive Service:
#1 Better outcomes (quality of the product, economic, synergy effect, learning)

U.S. Local Government Managers:
#1 Better outcomes (economic, quality of product, public service, mission accomplishment)
Consequences of Collaboration: Negatives

**Indian Forest Service:**
#1 Impedes process
#2 Relational (conflict)
#3 Poor outcomes

**U.S. Senior Executive Service:**
#1 Process (time consuming)
#2 Relational (conflict)
#3 Poor outcomes

**U.S. Local Government Managers:**
#1 Process (time consuming)
#2 Relational (conflict)
#3 Stress
Challenges to Collaboration

Indian Forest Service:
#1 Relational
#2 Organizational

U.S. Senior Executive Service:
#1 Relational
#2 Logistical

U.S. Local Government Managers:
#1 Political
#2 Relational
Skillset of the Collaborator

Indian Forest Service:
#1 Individual attributes (communication, open mind)
#2 Conflict management

U.S. Senior Executive Service:
#1 Individual attributes (open mind, communication)
#2 Group process skills (includes conflict management)

U.S. Local Government Managers:
#1 Individual attributes (open mind, unselfish, patient, trustworthy)
#2 Interpersonal skills
Importance of the Individual

Frederickson (2007): While organizations and established jurisdictions do formally collaborate, it is always in the form of managers and officials.

Effective collaboration is “deeply dependent” upon the skills of officials and managers.

Organizations may appear to collaborate, but in fact it is the individuals representing organizations who collaborate.
The Leadership Challenge

- More than 90% of global executives surveyed by the Center for Creative Leadership said collaboration is vital for leadership success.

- But less than half of those same executives said the leaders in their organizations were actually good at it.
The Transboundary Challenge

Solutions often transcend the position of any single participant

Salamon (2005) “... [S]hifts the emphasis from management skills and the control of large bureaucratic organizations to enablement skills, the skills required to engage partners arrayed horizontally ... to bring multiple stakeholders together for a common end in a situation of interdependence.”
The Collaboration Challenge

“Leading when you are not in charge”
Skillset of Collaborator

- Individual Attributes
- Interpersonal Skills
- Strategic Leadership Skills
- Group Process Skills
- Technical Skills
Individual Attributes
Interpersonal Skills

Effective Communication

Listening

Interpersonal Ability
Group Process Skills

- Facilitation
- Negotiation
- Collaborative problem solving
- Skill in group dynamics, culture, personalities
- Compromise
- Conflict resolution
- Consensus building
- Mediation
Strategic Leadership

- Big picture thinking
- Strategic Thinking
- Facilitative leadership
- Creative approaches to problem solving
- Sharing of leadership, power, goals, and credit
Substantive/Technical Knowledge

- Technical knowledge of the subject area: 13%
- Project management & organizational skills: 11%
- Time management: 2%
Skills Needed to Work Collaboratively

- “Individual Attributes”
- Interpersonal Skills
- Group Process Skills: Facilitation, Negotiation, Collaborative Problem Solving
- Conflict management
- Strategy and vision
- Technical skills
So What?

Insights for Human Resources, Sustainability and Governance
8 Tips from Master Collaborators

#1: Common Purpose

#2: Learn Interest-Based Collaborative Problem-Solving

#3: Don’t Be Afraid of Conflict: Expect It

#4: Face-to-Face
8 Tips from Master Collaborators

#5: Improvise

#6: Ask Thoughtful Questions

#7: Don’t Give Up

#8: Focus on Performance
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Selected References


